

Sports

Adebayo's step-back at buzzer propels Heat to win over Nets

LOS ANGELES: Bam Adebayo hit a thrilling game winner at the buzzer on Sunday to lift the Miami Heat to a 109-107 victory over the Brooklyn Nets, who lost superstar Kevin Durant to another injury. American Adebayo nailed a step-back 14-footer from the baseline as the Heat snapped a three-game losing skid.

Both teams were short-handed, with the Heat playing without Jimmy Butler (sprained ankle) and the Nets already without James Harden, who has a hamstring injury. Durant scored Brooklyn's first eight points before exiting the game with just under eight minutes remaining in the first quarter. The 11-time all-star was driving to the basket when he clashed knees with Heat forward Trevor Ariza. Durant suffered a left thigh contusion.

Durant returned to the Nets' lineup April 7 after a 23-game absence because of a hamstring injury. He has averaged 23.8 points while playing in four of the Nets' last five games. "He's sore, but we don't know how severe it is," Brooklyn coach Steve Nash said. Adebayo finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and five assists, and Slovenia's Goran Dragic finished with 18 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

Adebayo drove left, pulled up and launched a 14-footer as time expired. Adebayo knows his role with the team but still likes to get the green light sometimes from the bench during key moments in the

game. "He handled it the right way," coach Erik Spoelstra said. "He looked over to the bench, and at that point we just made eye contact. My hands were up, and it was like, 'OK, it just better be the last shot.'"

Landry Shamet scored a career-high 30 points and made seven-of-12 from beyond the arc, and Kyrie Irving chipped in with 20 points and nine assists for the Nets. "They were playing well, hitting a lot of shots, so you've got to give credit, like I always say," Irving said. "But there were definitely some preventable plays out there that I feel like just could have been better."

In New York, Julius Randle finished with 33 points and 10 assists as the New York Knicks withstood a 34-point performance from Zion Williamson by beating the New Orleans Pelicans 122-112 in overtime. Derrick Rose came off the bench to score a season-high 23 points, and RJ Barrett tallied 18 as the Knicks beat the Pelicans for the second time in three games. Both Barrett and Reggie Bullock, who had 15, contributed offensively before fouling out. Williamson also had nine rebounds and five assists, Eric Bledsoe scored 22 and Brandon Ingram added 19 for the Pelicans, who lost in overtime for the second consecutive game. Randle nailed two free throws with just over two minutes to go in overtime to give the Knicks a 112-105 lead, and New York cruised from there. — AFP



MIAMI: Bam Adebayo #13 of the Miami Heat shoots the ball against the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday at American Airlines Arena. — AFP

Verstappen wins at Imola as Hamilton rues rare mistake

IMOLA, Italy: Max Verstappen kept his cool to claim a chaotic rain-hit Emilia Romagna Grand Prix on Sunday as seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton recovered from a rare mistake to sneak in second. Red Bull driver Verstappen muscled past pole sitter Hamilton on the first corner at Imola to set up his impressive first win of the season. "I surprised myself. We worked really hard to make that better. In these tricky conditions we did a great job," the delighted Dutch driver said.

Lando Norris in a McLaren took third ahead of Charles Leclerc for Ferrari at the F1 giant's 'home' track close to their Maranello HQ. The outcome of a compelling second leg of the Formula One season confirmed Verstappen's stature as a formidable obstacle to Hamilton's quest for an unprecedented eighth drivers' crown.

After winning the season-opener in Bahrain and putting in the fastest lap on Sunday Hamilton leads Verstappen by a mere point - 44 to 43 - ahead of the Portuguese Grand Prix next time out. Drama in the race itself had been on the cards as rain drenched the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari in the run up to lights out, sparking mayhem.

Aston Martin mechanics had to scramble to douse flames on the rear brakes of Lance Stroll's car, their

counterparts at Mercedes got to work repairing a puncture on Valtteri Bottas' car, as Fernando Alonso's Alpine underwent a nose job after the two-time former champion hit a wall. Drivers then stood under umbrellas during a passionate rendition of the Italian national anthem. As the last note faded, the Italian AirForce's Arrows squadron executed an immaculate and deafening flyby over the circuit.

Once racing got underway Verstappen's silky smooth getaway proved decisive, the Dutchman leading out of the first corner, more or less untouched from here to the chequered flag by the mayhem in his wake. A high-speed crash concerning Bottas and George



IMOLA, Italy: Winner Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after the Emilia Romagna Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari race track on Sunday. — AFP

Russell in a Williams forced the race to be red-flagged as debris was cleared off the old Imola circuit.

Red flags

The pair collided at over 300kmh on lap 34, both drivers shaken as their wrecked cars were lifted off the track. Russell was furious, remonstrating with Bottas before the Finn had even got out of his car, slapping his helmet. The air was filled with four-letter expletives as the pair let off steam. Once back in the pits Russell tweeted: "Thanks for all the messages. I'm fine, just disappointed."

The red flags appeared a lap after an uncharacteristic slip-up from Hamilton saw the Mercedes world champion hurtle off the circuit into a gravel pit when placed second on a treacherous rain-hit track. Half an hour after the suspension, a rolling re-start saw Verstappen set off in front of Leclerc and Norris. Hamilton, his car repaired, had work to do from ninth.

As Verstappen calmly reeled in his 11th career victory, but first in Italy, Hamilton weaved his way up to sit third, and then second after passing Norris with three laps remaining. "On my side it wasn't the greatest of days. First time I've made a mistake in a long time, but I'm grateful I could bring the car home," said a relieved Hamilton. He more than anyone had benefitted from the red flag intervention as his run-off had left him with a damaged car and one lap behind.

"I was just trying to get over the gutting feeling when you make a mistake and moving on from it and learning from it - then get back into racing spirit and we still had some really fun battles with the guys," he reflected. With Norris in third this was the first time two Britons had climbed the podium since 2012. "It is nice to be fighting these guys. Nice to be here on merit," said Norris. — AFP

Iheanacho fires Leicester into FA Cup final

LONDON: Leicester reached the FA Cup final for the first time in 52 years as Kelechi Iheanacho's solitary goal earned a 1-0 win over Southampton in front of 4,000 fans at Wembley on Sunday. The biggest crowd for a football match in England for 13 months was made up of key workers and local residents as part of a test event for the return of fans in bigger numbers in the coming weeks.



LONDON: Leicester City's Nigerian striker Kelechi Iheanacho celebrates after scoring the opening goal of the English FA Cup semifinal football match between Leicester City and Southampton at Wembley Stadium on Sunday. — AFP

An 8,000 crowd will be in attendance at Wembley next Sunday for the League Cup final between Manchester City and Tottenham, while 21,000 will welcome Leicester back to the home of English football for the FA Cup final against Chelsea on May 15. "Even though there were only 4,000 it felt great," said Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers. "It will be amazing when we get supporters back into stadiums. I did hear some Leicester supporters in there and it was really nice. We have the chance to create history. That is what this game is about, creating a memory. I have been made aware since I've been at Leicester how important this cup is for the supporters."

There was little for the neutrals to get excited about on the field, though, as Leicester struggled to put away an out-of-sorts Southampton, who had been relying on Cup glory to save their season. Ralph Hasenhuttl's men have won just two of their last 14 Premier League games since the sides last met in January. "We left everything on the pitch today, but we had no shots on target," said Hasenhuttl, whose focus now turns to ensuring his side's top-flight survival.

Leicester were the better side throughout, but failed to test Fraser Forster before half-time as Jamie Vardy fired over from a narrow angle before Wilfred Ndidi's header dropped onto the roof of the net. The breakthrough came 10 minutes into the second half as Vardy's pace left Jan Bednarek trailing in this wake.

From his cross, Iheanacho fluffed his first effort, but the ball broke kindly back to the Nigerian to slot home his 12th goal in as many games. "The FA Cup loves me and I love the FA Cup," said Iheanacho. "I watched the FA Cup when I was little and now I get the chance to play in the final. It is such a big dream for me." — AFP

But they held fourth spot two points ahead of Napoli whose six-match winning streak at home was stopped by Inter.

In Naples, top Inter scorer Romelu Lukaku rattled the woodwork either side of Napoli's opener, an own-goal following a blunder from visiting goalkeeper Samir Handanovic. Lorenzo Insigne tried to connect with Victor Osimhen to finish off with Handanovic intercepting the ball only to lose control after colliding with Stefan de Vrij sending into his own net. Eriksen pulled Inter level 10 minutes after the break rifling in from just outside the penalty area.

In Milan, Gianluca Scamacca's 68th-minute own goal kept the seven-time European champions on course for a return to Champions League football next season. Stefano Pioli's side had not won their last six games in the San Siro in all competitions and were playing without suspended forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic. — AFP

Advantage Atletico after Real Madrid held by Getafe

MADRID: A depleted Real Madrid delivered a major boost to Atletico Madrid's title hopes on Sunday by drawing 0-0 with Getafe in La Liga. Atletico had thrashed Eibar 5-0 to reignite their own fading challenge and their victory proved even more valuable after Real Madrid were held to a goalless draw at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez.

It means Atletico extend their advantage at the top of the table from one to three points over Real while Barcelona, who now have a game in hand after winning the Copa del Rey final on Saturday, are five points back. Sevilla could yet join the race after they defeated Real Sociedad 2-1 but with six points separating them and Atletico, it remains more of an outside chance. Real Madrid have enjoyed an incredible two weeks after beating Barcelona in the Clasico last weekend between knocking out Liverpool over two legs in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. But a crippling list of injuries and absences means the squad is down to its bare bones and this was the game that finally caught up with them.

Zidane took only 13 senior outfield players to Getafe and still decided he had to rest Toni Kroos and Karim Benzema by starting them on the bench. Sergio Ramos, Ferland Mendy and Lucas Vazquez are both injured while Eden Hazard and Dani Carvajal were not deemed ready to return. Nacho Fernandez and Casemiro were both suspended, with Raphael Varane and Fede Valverde unavailable due to COVID-19 protocol. It meant Zidane named only three senior defenders, with the 21-year-old Victor Chust handed his first La Liga start at centre back and Alvaro Odriozola coming in at right back. Benzema came on but could not find a winner for Madrid, who will hope to have players back now for tomorrow's trip to Cadiz.

The first leg of the Champions League semi-final against Chelsea is also only nine days away. It represents a slight shift in momentum after four wins in 11 league games had seen Atletico's 10-point advantage in February reduced to one before this weekend. But a thumping victory over struggling Eibar at the Wanda Metropolitano may prove the spark to turn Atletico's form around. — AFP

Icardi fires PSG a point behind leaders Lille

PARIS: Mauro Icardi dragged Paris Saint-Germain to within one point of Ligue 1 leaders Lille on Sunday with the last-gasp winner in a dramatic 3-2 victory over Saint-Etienne, as Monaco and Lyon also boosted their title hopes. The champions closed the gap on Lille, who could only draw 1-1 with Montpellier on Friday, thanks to Icardi's 95th-minute header which claimed a win that had looked to have slipped away.

Monaco are only one point further back in third after cruising past Bordeaux 3-0, with Lyon three points behind Lille thanks to a 2-1 win at Nantes. At the Parc des Princes, Kylian Mbappe struck twice in quick succession to put PSG ahead after Denis Bouanga had given the away side a shock 78th-minute lead by guiding home Miguel Trauco's cross.

Romain Hamouma thought he had grabbed an improbable point for Saint-Etienne in the second minute of added time when Bouanga's saved shot fell at his feet in front of a gaping goal, giving him an easy tap-in. But Icardi capped a thrilling last quarter when he met fellow substitute Angel Di Maria's whipped cross with a perfect header three minutes later to spark wild celebrations among the PSG players. PSG, who had lost their previous three league home matches, are one of four teams in an exciting French title race with only five rounds of matches remaining in the season.

Monaco, the only team other than PSG to have won

Juve's Champions League at risk, Inter edge towards title

MILAN: Andrea Pirlo conceded Juventus missed Cristiano Ronaldo's "killer instinct" as the Italian champions fell to their first league defeat in two decades to Atalanta on Sunday leaving their participation in next season's Champions League at risk. Leaders Inter Milan edged towards the Serie A title despite a 1-1 draw at Napoli, to pull 13 points ahead of Juventus who dropped to fourth place.

Christian Eriksen snatched a point for Inter whose 11-match winning streak ended but who hold a nine-

point advantage on AC Milan as they target a first league title since 2010. Milan earlier got back winning in the San Siro after two months 2-1 against Genoa. Juve's nine-year reign as champions looks set to end with nine games left, and their European hopes are also at risk.

Substitute Ruslan Malinovskyi struck three minutes from time in Bergamo with a shot that took a deflection off Alex Sandro as Atalanta won 1-0 to move third. Juventus were playing without injured Ronaldo, the top scorer in Serie A with 25 goals this campaign. "We knew it would be tough against Atalanta," said Juve coach Andrea Pirlo. "Ronaldo is our finisher, he adapts to these matches, because he's a champion. He's a penalty area killer. Today we had our chances, we didn't use them and we were punished by an episode."



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates with Argentinian forward Mauro Icardi after scoring a goal during the Ligue 1 football match between PSG and Saint-Etienne at the Parc des Princes Stadium on Sunday. — AFP

Juve have failed to win any of the four matches they have played this season without 36-year-old Ronaldo.